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ABSTRACT

This document presents minimum standards for programs serving gifted and talented students. The first chapter discusses program design standards, with a focus on building a flexible system of program options throughout general and special education that can be matched with the needs, strengths, and interests of gifted and talented students. The second section covers standards for professional development of policy makers, administrators, teachers of gifted and talented students, support staff, and program personnel. The third section covers standards for identification of gifted/talented students, emphasizing the measurement of diverse abilities and intelligences using nondiscriminatory methods that employ both qualitative and quantitative techniques. A final section discusses curriculum design standards, including content, methodology, resources, and products of instruction. (PB)

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Standards for Programs Involving the Gifted and Talented

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Developed by

The Association for the Gifted

A Division of The Council for Exceptional Children

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Introduction

The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of The Council for Exceptional Children, began the process of establishing standards for programs including gifted and talented students in order to provide a base upon which local and state/provincial planners could build and evaluate educational offerings for this population. Programs for gifted and talented students appear to be on the rise throughout North America and the world, yet the quality of these programs is uneven at best. The standards presented here, developed with the assistance of hundreds of professionals involved in the field of gifted child education, are offered as one resource through which we can begin to strengthen the educational opportunities involving these students.

The standards can provide useful tools for program planners and evaluators. They describe *minimum* characteristics that should be found in all programs serving the gifted and talented (with or without the "G/T" designation). For new programs, they can be a guide for program development; for established programs, they can aid in reevaluating the policies and procedures already in place. It is our hope that the programs you sponsor will exceed the standards described herein and pave the way to more progressive standards in the future.

Standards that appear in this document have been developed through the work of participants in two symposia (Parke, 1987) and a research project sponsored by TAG. They represent the combined thinking of these professionals in the areas of assessing for identification purposes, program design, curriculum design, and professional development. While these four areas are critical to program success, they do not represent the full range of factors involved in delivering programs to the gifted and talented. Therefore, program planners will want to use other

resources in addition to the standards when developing and evaluating programs.

The Executive Board of TAG wishes to thank the many participants in this project from throughout the United States and Canada. We appreciate your continuing support and commitment to this work.

January 1989

REFERENCE

Parke, B. (1987). *First steps toward program standards in educating the gifted and talented*. Reston, VA: The Association for the Gifted.

Program Design Standards

Program design is the plan for the administrative configuration through which instruction is delivered to gifted and talented students. Since these students are receiving service throughout the educational system, programs that fall into this category go beyond those designated as "G/T" and include *all* programs in which gifted and talented students are involved. The intent is to build a flexible system of viable program options throughout the general and special education structures that are compatible with and can be matched to the strengths, needs, and interests of gifted and talented students.

1. Programs for the Gifted and Talented Are Articulated with General Education Programs

Programs for the gifted and talented are part of the general program offerings of the school district, as these students are typically involved in programs that are considered general education.

Articulation involves planning the extension of general education programs in order to address the needs of these students; policy review to assure that policies encourage involvement in rigorous programs; and communication between parties to keep all participants informed and the program developing.

2. Programs Are Comprehensive, Structured, and Sequenced Across Grade Levels

Comprehensive programs for the gifted and talented go beyond academics and include options in areas such as the arts, leadership, and creativity. These programs are planned and ordered so that students can continue to develop their skills.

3. **Programs Are an Integral Part of the School Day and May Be Extended to Other School and Community Related Settings**

Programs for the gifted and talented are central to the students' educational program and meet during the school day. In some instances, programs may be held before or after school or in settings other than school when the nature of the experience (not the convenience of the schedule) requires this timing.

4. **Administrative Structures and Program Options Are Based on Student Needs**

The program options offered are determined by the needs of the students being served. These options may vary based on the needs and resources of the community. Ongoing needs assessments are necessary in order to assure that current needs and options are compatible.

5. **All Gifted and Talented Students Are Assured Programs Commensurate with Their Abilities**

Programs are available that represent the varying ranges of ability and needs displayed by gifted and talented students. Access to the programs is guaranteed to these students.

6. **Resources for Program Development and Implementation Are Distributed Equitably Throughout the School District**

Gifted and talented students throughout a school district are given appropriate educational programs regardless of the school they attend. Resources are distributed based on student needs.

7. **Programs Incorporate a Blend of Community Resources and School-Based Support Services in Program Development and Delivery**

School psychologists, social workers, content area specialists, counselors, and community members add expertise to the planning and implementation of program options. They expand the range of support for the programs and open doors to

opportunities for students beyond those available through the district or individual program personnel.

8. Specialists in Gifted Child Education Are Consulted in Program Policy Development

Informed advocates for these students give district personnel guidance in program planning so that the procedures and policies are consistent with the needs of gifted and talented students.

9. Ongoing Program Evaluation Activities Are Conducted for the Purpose of Continued Program Development

A plan for evaluation is in place and implemented so that program decisions are based on data generated from program students and personnel.

Professional Development Standards

Program success is closely tied to the personnel involved in program planning and delivery. For the most part, this includes policy makers, administrators, teachers of classes involving gifted students, support staff, and program personnel. In order to assure that the programs and curricula offered are appropriate to the nature and needs of the gifted and talented, knowledge of these areas is vital. Continued professional development in the area of gifted child education and content areas is also critical, as it is through this process that persons involved in the program remain current and can bring new expertise to the delivery and content of the program.

1. Coursework for Initial Teacher Preparation Includes Systematic Instruction in the Nature and Needs of Gifted and Talented Students

Because most teachers have gifted and talented students in their classes, it is important that they understand the needs of these students and methods for their instruction.

2. Educators Providing Direct Service to Gifted and Talented Students Have Completed the Following:

- An undergraduate emphasis in liberal arts or a content area.
- Professional coursework in general teacher education and/or content area.
- Teaching experience.
- Specialized training in gifted child education in accordance with CEC/NCATE guidelines for teacher education majors, or demonstrated knowledge of the nature and needs of gifted and talented students for content specialists.

Direct service is given by any person involved in policy development, program planning, or program implementation.

3. **Noncertified Individuals Who Offer Specialized Instruction or Mentoring for Gifted and Talented Students Demonstrate Understanding of the Nature and Needs of These Students**

4. **Educators Specializing in Gifted Child Education Demonstrate Mastery of This Area in Accordance with CEC/NCATE Standards for Personnel Preparation and Sufficient Knowledge of the Content Area(s) They Instruct to Provide Effective Differentiated Instruction to Gifted and Talented Students**

5. **Educators Specializing in Content Areas Demonstrate Mastery of the Content Area(s) in Accordance with Professional Standards and Sufficient Knowledge of the Nature and Needs of the Gifted and Talented to Provide Effective Differentiated Instruction to These Students**

6. **Educators with Administrative or Instructional Responsibility for Programs Including Gifted and Talented Students Implement Plans for Their Own Continuing Professional Development**

Plans include study in areas pertinent to the educational or personal needs of the professional such as educating the gifted and talented, content areas, technology, instructional strategies, decision making, school reform, etc. Master teachers, internships, graduate study, and cooperative learning are among the strategies that can be used for professional development.

7. **Professional Development Opportunities in Gifted Child Education Are Available on a Regular Basis to All Staff Members**

Workshops, lectures, professional libraries, newsletters, visitations, and demonstration teaching are among the professional development opportunities that can be available to staff members.

Assessment for Identification Standards

Assessment activities used in programs for gifted and talented students focus in part on identifying student profiles of ability for use in program planning and placement. Discovering the nature and needs of the population in a school district gives program planners the information needed to develop programs and curricula for these students. The talent pool of students determined through wide-ranging assessments of student ability can be drawn upon when students are being matched to a particular program placement. This identification process should be broad based and include as many students and abilities as possible.

1. Instruments and Procedures Used for Identifying Students Measure Diverse Abilities and Intelligences

Students are gifted and talented in a wide range of abilities areas. When conducting assessment for the purpose of identification, student strengths and needs are determined in as many spheres as possible.

2. Assessments for Identification Purposes Include Information on the Students' Potential and Demonstrated Abilities

Students' current as well as potential levels of performance are important when matching student profiles of ability to program options and when developing programs. Cognitive, affective, and personality factors are pertinent data to be collected for these purposes.

3. Instruments and Procedures Used in the Identification Process Correspond to the Area(s) of Ability Being Assessed

Different areas of ability require different procedures in order to be adequately measured. The unique aspects of the ability and the purpose of the assessment are taken into account when the assessment instruments and procedures are selected.

4. Data Collection Procedures Employ Qualitative and Quantitative Formats

A balance between qualitative and quantitative measures can be achieved by selecting among instruments such as standardized tests (IQ, aptitude, achievement, etc.); criterion-referenced tests; observations by trained teachers and other professionals; demonstrations and portfolios; self, peer, and parent nominations; student interviews; and evaluations of students' participation in established programs.

5. Nondiscriminatory Assessment Procedures and Instruments Are Used in Order to Ensure That Special Populations Are Fairly Assessed

Assessment instruments and procedures must be in place that fairly measure the capabilities of all students. Cultural heritage, economic condition, gender, handicapping condition, native language, and other factors that mitigate against fair assessment must be taken into account when procedures and instruments are chosen.

6. The Identification Process Is Open and Available to All Students

All students in the district are potential candidates for program inclusion and should be given the opportunity to qualify for its activities.

7. Systems Are Established Through Which Assessment Data Can Be Shared with Parents, Educational Staff Members, and Students in Ways That Are Meaningful and Useful for Each Group's Varied Purposes

Conferences with students, parents, referring teachers, and homeroom teachers are made available in order to explain

student performance levels on assessment instruments. Due process procedures are also in place and available.

8. Trained Personnel Are Used at the Different Stages of the Assessment Process According to Their Expertise in the Various Aspects of Assessment

Screening and referral, data gathering and testing, data interpretation, and selection and placement are among the assessment activities in which trained personnel should be involved.

9. A Systematic and Ongoing Plan to Review and Reevaluate Current Assessment Procedures Is Employed

As program activities and the population in a school district change, so must the assessment procedures and instruments. Technical advances in the field of testing and evaluation may also provide more effective or efficient means of assessment.

Curriculum Design Standards

Curriculum design is the plan for the instructional component of the gifted and talented student's program. It includes the content, methodology, resources, and products of instruction. Without sound curricular practices, program configurations are meaningless. Curriculum involving gifted and talented students is the focus of these standards. They should be applied to any class in which gifted and talented students are enrolled.

1. Curriculum (Preschool-12) Is Articulated, Comprehensive, and Includes Substantive Scope and Sequence

Curriculum that responds to the needs of gifted and talented students appears in all grades and all subject areas. A scope and sequence plan outlining the types and progression of skills to be learned is available and consulted when making curricular decisions about individual students.

2. Curriculum Is Based on the Assessed Needs of Students Including the Areas of Intellectual, Emotional, Physical, Ethical, and Social Development

The needs of gifted and talented students extend beyond academics. Full-scale assessment conducted during or after identification can give instructors valuable information for curricular planning.

A student's instructional plan reflects the unique needs of the individual student.

3. Curriculum Matches Substantive Content with the Developmental Levels of the Gifted and Talented Student

Most gifted students have uneven developmental patterns that must be taken into account when planning curriculum. Physical,

cognitive, and emotional growth are among the developmental factors that can affect how students learn and how they express what they have learned.

4. Curriculum Incorporates Content and Experiences That Employ and Facilitate Understanding of the Latest Ideas, Principles, and Technology in a Given Content Area

With rapidly changing academic fields of study, it is important that curriculum including gifted and talented students recognizes new ideas and is modified to reflect the changes in the form of the disciplines, how the fields are thought about and conveyed, what is important to know, and the technology used.

5. Curriculum Provides Differentiation and Challenge for Students Through Involvement with Advanced and Rigorous Content and Procedures

The content and procedures used in curriculum are compatible with the abilities of the students involved in it. The opportunity to study content at a level commensurate with ability and achievement levels is offered to all gifted and talented students.

6. Students Develop Critical and Creative Thinking Skills Through Instruction and Experiences Rooted in the Content Areas

Skills for processing and evaluating information are part of the curriculum design. Students employ such techniques as original research, independent study, problem solving, and invention as part of their study of content areas in order to develop these skills.

7. Students Have Opportunities to Engage in Experiential and Interactive Learning Involving Real Life Experiences That May Result in the Development of Sophisticated Products

Gifted and talented students are given the chance to become actively involved with the field they are studying. This may include activities such as working with a professional in the field through a mentorship or internship, studying a topic in depth

in the library or laboratory, or developing an original product (i.e., book, idea, plan, portfolio, etc.) and presenting it publicly.

8. Flexible Pacing Is Employed, Allowing Students to Learn at the Pace and Level Appropriate to Their Abilities and Skills

Students are given the opportunity to work at their own level and pace. Assessment of skill levels, acceleration, skill groups, curriculum compacting, and individualization are among the methods that may be a part of the flexible pacing process.

9. Curriculum Addresses the Attitudes and Skills Needed for Lifelong Independent Learning

Gifted and talented students learn a great deal on their own. It is vital that they be given the opportunity to develop the skills needed to become lifelong, independent learners.

10. Specialists in Content Areas, Instructional Techniques, and Gifted Child Education Work with Curriculum Planners When Curriculum Is Being Planned and Evaluated

A team approach to curriculum planning is in place, to ensure that the curriculum responds to the needs of gifted students, reflects current content of practices in the academic fields, and is consistent with the goals and policies of the school district.